

Serials

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Original Papers.

THE HEART OF STEEL.

THE INEBRIATE'S DAUGHTER.

A TALE OF THE UNFORTUNATE.
BY H. LANSING BURROWS.

Author of "The Prince of the Pine-Whisperers," "The Heir of Bothwell Manor," "Wind," "The Stygian Papers," &c.

THE SPY.

"Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the darkest smoke of hell!
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes;
Nor Heaven purge through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, hold! hold!"

"Knight of olden times! I bid thee hold!
Or my good steel shall lay thee cold;
Thou art a villain, and I bid thee hold!"

The night approached, which was to behold the consummation of our narrative. Poor Alice! she had set her for hours, but no relief seemed to come near her, a horrible sensation crept over her frame; soon after the ruffian's departure the room was lighted on by the dusky rays that scarcely lived through the metal shutter. How terrible, indeed, was her situation. She had now been held in the strong clamps of the curious chair for a number of hours and her limbs were festering, and her head swimming.

When O'Flanagan, having thus heartlessly confined the delicate girl, returned, it was past noon, and Alice, from excess of pain had fainted. Instantly releasing her by means of a concealed spring he gently lifted her from the chair, and laid her upon the floor. Sprinkling a few drops of water upon her face he anxiously watched the course which her features would take. Gradually she recovered her consciousness, and as she looked into the face of her persecutor she shrank back, and with a voice that would have melted a heart of stone implored him to have mercy upon her.

"Well, my child," he commenced in hypocritical tones, "how do you feel now? Is your better?" That chair was a little inconvenient, I know, but I was afraid you might wander away, and I should thereby lose a fortune."

"Oh! sir, what have I done to merit this treatment? I have harmed none in the world. Oh! sir, have pity upon me, 'tis so cruel! Why not kill me at once? Such agony—oh! my brain is turning. Mother! Mother! and the delicate Alice overcome again by the terrible cramping which her body had undergone, fainted again in the arms of the ruffian.

O'Flanagan was alarmed, and well he had occasion to be, for Alice was truly suffering. The close confinement which her frame, slight by nature, had endured; the burning fever occasioned by the terrible cramping thoughts that revolved continually in her mind; the demands of Nature, for the captive had tasted no food nor quenched her thirst since the previous night; all conspired to throw her into a critical position. Yet, so it was ordained by Providence; for the ruffian, who had postponed when he gazed upon the withering form of the beautiful maiden; his assassin's nature was gone, and he half-relucted the promises he had made to the Alderman.

When Alice had again recovered, she was too weak to offer resistance, and her persecutor and she reclined upon his arm, with her head leaning against his bosom. She felt now no danger, for grim death would have been welcomed to relieve her of her mental and physical anguish. O'Flanagan looked upon the girl, and his eye met the pleading, heart-breaking gaze of hers, and he could not stand it, he turned his eye away.

"Your name is Alice Rowand, you say?" "It is," muttered Alice, almost involuntarily.

Your father married Fannie Effingham, who resided in the arch street in Ireland." "Yes," was her low answer.

"Does he still live?" "Six months ago, sir, I saw him last, and then he was alive."

Your mother? "She also lived."

Where are they now? "I know not."

"Be careful, girl; mark me now, your life depends upon the answers you give me. I warn you, for you lie in imminent danger. Do your parents, and where are they?"

"So help me God, I know neither fact." "When saw you your father last?"

"It has now been some seven months since I have been separated from him by the burning of his house. I have not seen him from that time, nor do I know if he lives; if he does, I know not where he is."

"Girl, you are ill, but this answer must be forced from your lips by torture. Again, I say, where are your parents?"

"By the Supreme Ruler, I know not. Pray, give me water!"

The ruffian handed her a glass of water, which she drank with avidity.

"You need refreshments, too."

O'Flanagan setting out a little table by the lounge, took a plate from a cupboard on which was half a loaf, and setting it by her side, laid her out.

When she had finished—and she could eat but little—she sank exhausted upon the couch and closed her eyes. She was suffering the most intense pain, and with difficulty she strove to suppress the means that would give vent to her feelings.

"You suffer?" said O'Flanagan, but it will all be over in time. I shall leave you free, but attempt not on your life to escape from this house. When you are hungry, behold enough to satisfy your cravings; water is convenient, and now I ask again, do you or do you not know the residence of your parents?"

"I have told but the truth, so help me God!" was the faint answer that the girl could scarcely breathe.

"This sufficient, girl; but it will be a sad hour to you when you tell that to another. I have pity on you, and leave you now. I had

intended to—to—yes, murder you, but you shall live still longer to witness the triumph of Handy O'Flanagan.

The door closed and he was gone.

As the sun sat behind a curtain of cloud in the far west, our noble hero, Frank Belton, returned from his father's house, and mounting a fine horse, dashed away to the distant Moyamensing. He drew the rein before a large stone building on Passayunk Road, and having enquired for the Superintendent of Police, asked that he might find two or three men at a corner of a certain street to watch a suspected locality, at the hour of ten that night. Of course this request was granted. It was dark when he arrived at his home; he found that his father had locked himself within the sanctity of his own apartment, with orders not to be disturbed.

Frank pondered within himself. Surely his father was about to give his sanction to the deed which his aversion had prompted him to conjure.

The hours passed slowly enough to the youth, and his heart grew sadder as the benzen monitor near, informed him that the appointed time had rolled around. To smuggle himself unseen into the apartment to hear the conversation of the two plotters, was almost impossible, for, though he might contrive to enter, he could not leave the room without suffering detection. Fortunately there was a niche in the wall by his father's door, and throwing an overcoat over a nail, which was above it, he crept into the niche and was completely hid by the coat. Thus engaged he silently and with no little impatience, awaited the return of the ruffian O'Flanagan.

He was not compelled to wait long, for soon the bell was rung violently, and Aubrey Belton hurried to the door to admit his comrade in crime. Silently they proceeded to the room, and passing by the cancelled door, the spy entered the secret chamber, and the door was locked. Gliding noiselessly from the niche Frank bent his ear to the keyhole, and recognized the voice of O'Flanagan.

"And now what of the girl?" anxiously enquired Aubrey Belton, when the door was locked and he had returned to his seat at the table.

"She is very ill and suffers much," returned O'Flanagan with his imperturbable coolness.

"The devil! I care not whether she be well or ill, or how she suffers. Did you ask her?" "The devil! I told you, and did she answer? Where are her parents?"

"A truce, a truce," exclaimed the ruffian, with an attempt at gaiety. "One question at a time, my lord."

"Did you ask her the questions?" "I did."

"And her answers?" "What were they?" "That six months since she saw her parents last, and now she knows not if they live at all; or if they are in existence, where they live, she knows not."

"Topple! and she knows not?" "So she says, and swears it."

"Did you threaten her with torture and death?" "Yes, but she shrank not at the mention of torture, and seemed to welcome the very idea of death."

"Awful wretch that you are!" muttered the spy, "what sufferings she must undergo to go for death. Well, well, I'll repay you for this with compound interest, see if I don't."

"Then—MURDER HER!" hissed the Alderman. "Now go!"

"Oh! no, not so fast, my friend. Where is the recompense for this murder?"

"Hush! don't use that word, so loud, it's a bad word, it sounds to my heart."

"Would to God it could melt it," prayed the spy.

"How much do you desire?" "Every cent of one thousand dollars."

"Will you not go down, extortioner?" "No, more is five hundred. When you can bring me proof of her death, the remainder shall be at your order."

The check that was the price of blood was handed to the ruffian, and placing it in his pocket he arose to go. But the spy, who had followed him, and gazing noiselessly from the place, waited in the shadow of a house for the coming of his enemy. Happily the night was dark, and with this advantage he could track O'Flanagan easily by the sound of his footsteps. But his own; he had not thought of that, and drawing his knife hastily separated the heels from his boots and impatiently waited.

O'Flanagan came and started towards the southern portion of the city in a brisk walk. Noisily did the spy follow. In about five-fourths of an hour he gained the point where the ruffian was seen, and he beckoned to him to accompany him, followed on to the very house of the ruffian. O'Flanagan stopped, unlocked the door, and as the heavy portal swung back to its place, Frank echoed a hearty "Thank God! we are not detected!"

But they hesitated not, for one of the guardians of the city produced a bunch of skeleton keys, and in a moment the door yielded noiselessly to their pressure. The darkness of the inner passage way was slightly dispelled by the rays of light that were streaming from the half-opened door, which led into the room where the fair victim of Belton's aversion lay. O'Flanagan was heard in the room, while Frank and his associates anxiously awaited their opportunity to strike the decisive blow.

"Well, my little angel," the gruff voice of O'Flanagan was heard to say, "how do you feel now?"

"My God, what a wretch!" muttered Frank between his teeth.

"Look up, Alice Rowand, you have told me that you did not know where your parents now live. Once more I bid you tell me, or see this."

Frank cautiously peeped in the door, and saw the ruffian standing over the couch with a drawn knife.

"Mercy sir," faintly implored Alice, "but I know not."

"In the name of the law!" exclaimed a new voice, as a hand was laid upon the would-be murderer's shoulder.

The tableau silently changed; there was no outcry or struggle. O'Flanagan was in the hands of the faithful guardian of the peace, while Frank was bending over the fragile girl, who had swooned in his arms.

XXIV.

THE EDITOR OF THE ALBERT.

"My conscience has a hundred several tongues, And every tongue speaks in a several tale, And every tale condemns me for a villain."

SHAKESPEARE'S RICHARD III.

John Garland did not sit long in his sanctum, patting his cat, and scanning the thoughts that were whirling in his brain. He was revolving in his mind whether he should or should not confront Aubrey Belton, and demand from him the will and bring him

to justice. He had, however, another motive for this.

The editor hailed a passing omnibus, gave a few parting instructions to Parker, and was soon set down in the neighborhood of the Alderman's house. Ringing the bell he asked for the plotting official, and was ushered into a capacious parlor; here he had not long to wait before he was waited upon by the Alderman himself. Notwithstanding the deep, singeing sensations of remorse that was tearing his soul, he attempted to appear very affable to the editor of the "Daily Stylus."

"Mr. Belton, I presume your recollection dates as far back as the hour of our search for that young girl, for whose welfare you seem to display so much interest."

"I don't think that I am so fuddled as to forget the search of last night."

"Ah! well; when we met this morning I forgot to ask what I wish to ask now, if you do not deem it impertinent?"

"I am ready to hear," was the gracious assurance.

"Is there a particular interest that prompted you to the discovery of Alice Rowand, or is it a desire to act a benevolent act in life?"

"Both motives are mine."

"Then what if I should tell you that the girl is found?"

"Is she in your hands?" quickly asked the Alderman.

"No, not exactly, but in good ones, I suppose," said the editor; the plotting Alderman detected a slight tincture of irony and sarcasm in the voice. "I suppose she will be all cared for."

"Yes, I suppose so; and now pray let me ask you the same question you propounded to me."

"First, it was merely to promote the girl's welfare and happiness. Now, it is a personal matter. I wish to see her. Listen, and I'll tell you a story."

"Proceed, if it relates to her; I am anxious to hear."

"Some years ago there lived across the ocean a lord of great influence and riches. Near him lived two men, best to be friends, and was a firm friend of the family thus broken asunder and separated. To restore one of that very family to his arms and to her rights, has often been one of my earthly objects, if I could ever discover it."

"And where is your application?" asked the Alderman, unmoved.

"There is a man in this city who has loved that little child we seek. Fortune once threw her in his way, and once he sheltered her from the last of her father's oppression and wrong. She stayed from that protector, and her father led her careless feet far out of the reach of her new home."

"Still you seem to be enigmatical."

"There is another man in this vast city, who has loved that little child we seek. Fortune once threw her in his way, and once he sheltered her from the last of her father's oppression and wrong. She stayed from that protector, and her father led her careless feet far out of the reach of her new home."

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on the night before. But now, what was the editor to do?

"I cannot betray the young man's father," he mused, as again he sat alone in his office. "That would be decidedly out of the way. Now, what must I do? Well, the best plan would be to let all this alone, and see how my little hero meets her Leander to night. I'll see the result of Belton's mission first, and then think about it. Now, this whole matter tells me that happiness is a mere nothing. I seek happiness in one way, and Aubrey Belton seeks it by adding more wealth to his store. Dear me—bless my soul, what fools men do make of themselves! I may be a misanthrope, but to me happiness is emphatically a pig with a greasy tail, which every body seeks to get, and nobody can. Come in!"

A knock at the door had startled the editor, and a dirty, vulgar looking individual obeyed the summons.

"Sir," said he, addressing the horrified knight of the pen, "I am an author, and I may say, of some notoriety. I am one who lives entirely by his pen."

"Eh! what? you, a writer, you ought to live in a pen!"

The author looked down in despair.

"Oh! dear, I can't."

"Meet with success. I can't do anything. I wish I could just lie down and die."

"Eh! want to die, do you! Bless my soul, you're a paradox; I never saw one who might be equal to you. I want to die, do you? Well, here's a little piece of advice, call that man in there for a witness and kill yourself."

"No! no!" and the individual shrank back from the bottle which the editor offered him.

"Oh, no!" sneered John Garland, "you want to live, and because the cat's paw won't do, you advise; dress yourself like a gentleman and a civilized American, and not like a Mongol Tartar or a Caffre. Get up in the morning and see the sun rise. I'll bet you a hat you never saw that very curious phenomenon. Near him lived two men, best to be friends, and was a firm friend of the family thus broken asunder and separated. To restore one of that very family to his arms and to her rights, has often been one of my earthly objects, if I could ever discover it."

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"I hope you always found me willing to do what's reasonable, Bruce replied, changing color; but if it all the same to you, sir, I'd rather we should both go down together."

The captain descended the stairs, and the editor followed him nobly in the cabin!

They examined the state rooms. Not a soul to be found!

"Well, Mr. Bruce," said the captain, "did not I tell you you had been dreaming?"

"It's all very well to say so, sir; but if I didn't see that man writing on your slate, I may never see my home and family again!"

"Ah! writing on the slate. Then a shadow should be still." And the captain took it up.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "here's something sure enough! Is that your writing, Mr. Bruce?"

"The man took the slate, and there, in plain, legible characters, stood the words 'Steer to the port west.'"

"Have you been trifling with me, sir?" asked the captain, in a stern manner.

"On my word, as a man and a sailor, sir," replied Bruce, "I know no more of this matter than you do. I have told you the exact truth."

The captain sat down at his desk, the slate before him, in deep thought. At last, turning the slate over,